

Third Sunday of Lent B - 2021
Exodus 20.1-17///1 Corinthians 1.22-25///John 2.13-25

→one of the unique virtues about each of us is that we possess certain qualities of our personalities that, at times, can be considered as an **attribute** as well as a **liability**

→[i.o.w.] they are characteristics that can be thought of as either a **positive** or **negative**...that can **add** or **detract** from who we are as people and how we relate to others and how others relate to us.

→let me give you an example about myself...being a type A personality with roots of an obsessive compulsive mentality

.....I have come to hate clutter and messiness in my life.

→I am forever straightening things, cleaning up, and throwing away anything that can be considered clutter or not needed

→...my motto is that if it hasn't been touched in 6 months...throw it away

→now in some respects....this is a good thing...but it also can be bad

→it's a good because [for me]...things are always neat and in order...clean, tidy, cleansed, and uncluttered...

→however.....in my haste to get rid of clutter ...I often throw things away that eventually I need, or is something that shouldn't have been thrown away to begin with....

→and that is why....two of today's Scripture readings appeal to me....because for someone who doesn't like clutter, or messiness, or confusion...the reciting of the Ten Commandments from the Book of Exodus and our Lord's cleansing of the Temple in the Gospel catch my attention.

→in a word....both of these readings form for us a **foundation** for “cleansing our lives”

→the Ten Commandments is central to God’s law

→for keeping life holy and living according to God’s will.

→and the episode of cleansing the Temple, clearing out of the clutter in the Temple precincts is the groundwork for all that follows in our Lord’s ministry.

→it is interesting to note, that unlike the other Gospel accounts, in John’s version, the cleansing of the Temple is placed at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry rather than at the end.

→very often we tend to think of this episode....as happening at the end of Jesus’s time here on earth...right before he was to be captured and arrested

→...but in reality.....this was one of the first events of Jesus’ ministry....so that it could be a sign to the people of what Jesus was all about

→and more importantly.....what our lives should be about as followers of Jesus.

PAUSE

→both readings today [from Exodus and our gospel passage] illustrate moments of cleansing for you and me,

→cleansing in our lives....

→cleansing as we attempt to heal our brokenness...

→and cleansing as we look forward to the celebration of Easter and the resurrection of the Lord and ourselves.

→[you know] very often...we tend to interpret the ten commandments simply as a list of rules to follow...a stony catalog of laws designed to put us in our place...

→however in reality the ten commandments are really a way for a flawed and sinful people, wandering in the wilderness

...to be formed into a community of faith and purpose....PAUSE

→the stone tablets when given to Moses..... point the Israelites to a way out of the wilderness

---a way out of bondage

---a way out of slavery

→the commandments taught the Israelites how to live in community, how to live in the freedom of God's love and what was to be expected of them

→and 2000 years later...they teach you and me the very same thing...how to live with each other...free from all those things that can easily take over our lives...that keep us from loving God with all of our heart, soul and mind and others as our selves.

→and then we hear about.....Jesus cleansing the temple

...however beyond throwing out the money changers and merchants

...the purpose of Jesus's actions was to show how a clean heart, a clean life can lead to discovering God's love

→...how an uncluttered and focused life can lead to holiness and wholeness.

And that is what this season of Lent...where we have been encouraged to "*mend our heart...a new kind of hope*" is all about

PAUSE

→if Lent creates anything in us

....I hope...it creates a place [a moment] of cleansing

→[you know] the meaning of giving something up for Lent...of denying ourselves some personal enjoyment during this time.....is the outward expression of this “cleansing” but there also has to be an inward cleansing [as well] of our heart and mind

→the cleansing of the Temple...is similar to the cleansing God longs to do in our lives

→like the merchants that Jesus expelledsadly in our world today we have allowed money and noise, clutter and profanity, possessions and greed to overtake our lives...often preventing God from being a part of who we are

→and yet.....[PAUSE].....perhaps the true gift of this Lenten journey should be for you and me to invite the Lord to make a whip of cords for us and to cleanse the profane, crowded, self-serving clutter we have gathered for ourselves

→to once again renew our faith in Jesus Christ by living the words of those stone tablets given to Moses so long ago... that still have true meaning in our world today

→to cleanse our lives and hearts from all that prevents us from being one with God

→and to continue our journey out of the wilderness

.....a journey that not only leads us to the foot of the cross.....

.....but to the stone that one day will be rolled away from our tomb.....